



‘Wakanda Forever’ Scores Record Opening



This image released by Marvel Studios shows, from left, Dorothy Steel as Merchant Tribe Elder, Florence Kasumba as Ayo, Angela Bassett as Ramonda, and Danai Gurira as Okoye in a scene from "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever." (Marvel Studios via AP)

**Marvel film
directed by Ryan
Coogler hits
theaters, scoring
second biggest
opening release**

(AP) - The box office roared back to life with the long-awaited release of "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever."

The Marvel sequel earned \$180 million in ticket sales from more than 4,396 theaters in the U.S. and Canada, according to estimates from The Walt Disney Co. on Sunday, making it the second biggest opening of the year behind "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness." Overseas, it brought in an additional \$150 million from 50 territories, bringing its worldwide total to \$330 million.

"Wakanda Forever" was eagerly anticipated by both audiences and exhibitors, who have

weathered a slow spell at the box office since the summer movie season ended and there were fewer bigger budget blockbusters in the pipeline. The film got off to a mighty start a bit stronger than even the first film with an \$84 million opening day, including \$28 million from Thursday previews.

"Some may have hoped for \$200 million like the first film, but this is solid," said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore's senior media analyst. "This is the type of movie that theaters

really need to drive audiences."

The first film opened to \$202 million in February 2018 and went on to gross over \$1.4 billion worldwide, making it one of the highest grossing films of all time and a cultural phenomenon. A sequel was inevitable, and development began soon after with director Ryan Coogler returning, but everything changed after Chadwick Boseman's unexpected death in August 2020. "Wakanda Forever" became, instead, about the death of Boseman's

King T'Challa/Black Panther, and the grieving kingdom he left behind. Returning actors include Angela Bassett, Lupita Nyong'o, Letitia Wright, Winston Duke and Danai Gurira, who face off against a new foe in Tenoch Huerta's Namor. The film would face more complications too, including Wright getting injured and some COVID-19 related setbacks. All told, it cost a reported \$250 million to make, not accounting for marketing and promotion.

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